

The Lion

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Saint Mark's Parish, Denver, Colorado*

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HOW TO BE AN ORTHODOX THEOLOGIAN

A lecture delivered by Subdeacon
John Woolley at the St Laurence
Retreat Campus on the Feast of the
Assumption of the Theotokos,
2009

IN EXAMINING the question of Orthodox theological methodology, it is worth our examining, briefly, the not-entirely-Orthodox path (or the most prominent of the several paths) taken over the last eight hundred years or so by Western theology. That is, I propose to answer the question of "How to be an Orthodox theologian" in part by talking about how not to be an Orthodox theologian. Orthodox speakers do this kind of thing frequently; it is often useful for us to contrast our theology and our ways of doing things with the theology and practice of the West; not in a spirit of triumphal self-congratulation at how the West erred and the East did not, but rather for three principal reasons.

1. We do well to remember that the Western theology of the Patristic period was entirely Orthodox – even though, with our knowledge of later developments, we can discern in some of the Western fathers the seeds of what would later develop into heterodox errors. (I'm thinking particularly to the papal "mystique" that gradually took over Roman ecclesiological thinking, beginning as early as the 5th century, with St Damasus and St Leo the Great.) It can

serve as a brake and caution to us to perceive how a perfectly Orthodox school of theological thought can fall, over a course of centuries, into un-Orthodox patterns and habits of thinking. That is, by discerning where Western, and especially scholastic, theology went wrong, we can ourselves – it is to be hoped – avoid making similar mistakes. Conversely, it will be useful to us to identify the reasons (under God's providence) why the East did not make the same missteps, and to discern the habits of thought that served to protect Orthodox theology in ancient and mediaeval times from reducing itself to a simple philosophical system, in order to assure that we modern Orthodox will continue along the same path of theological growth without distortion or innovation.

2. Not everything the West has done is wrong; some of what even heterodox or schismatic Westerners have done is entirely right. We Orthodox have an unfortunate tendency to reject anything Western that differs from the patterns most familiar to us, without always bothering to discern whether the difference is one of real substance, or (on the other hand) simply one of language, culture, or style – or a difference in emphasis or stress between perfectly Orthodox alternatives. (As only one of many possible instances of what I'm talking about, consider how some Orthodox thinkers reject Anselm's particular soteriological formulations in terms that sometimes verge on a rejection of the whole concept of sacrificial propitiation in any form.) Just as Orthodoxy – the Orthodoxy of the entire Church, and our own individual "orthodoxies" – is enriched by the multi-national diversity (to use the current in-word) of the Church (Slavic, Greek, Arabic,

Georgian, and so on), we might find ourselves enriched also, both as the Church and as individual Christians, by finding ways to incorporate and assimilate the ancient Orthodoxy of England, France, Italy, Ireland, and so on, and those practices and pieties

of the present-day West that are consistent with Orthodox belief. That is, we need to discern, with humility and charity, what remains of genuine Orthodoxy and what has grown from the uncorrupted root of genuine Orthodoxy in the "schismatic" or "heterodox" West.



His Grace Bishop Basil Ordains Andrew Greenlee and Oliver John Brainerd as Readers at St. Mark's on the Eve of the Nativity of the BVM, 7 September 2009. His Grace's Sermon is an audio file at : http://www.westernorthodox.com/stmark/sermons/Nativity_Holy_Virgin_Eve_2009.mp3

3. It seems likely that in order for Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants to return, in any great numbers, to the communion of the Church, it will be necessary for Orthodox theologians to find ways to engage them intellectually, not merely by our presenting for their instruction the doctrines and praxis of the Church, but also by our possessing and exhibiting an accurate knowledge and genuine understanding (even a sympathetic comprehension) of their doctrines and opinions; and not merely of their theological schools, but just as importantly of the underlying divergence in methodology that led (in the course of time) to our present multitude of differences. In the current conditions of the world, much of the effectiveness of Orthodox missionary outreach to the scattered Christians of the West will depend on our grasping how, and to what degree, the Orthodoxy of the West went wrong – and where it remained faithful. Again, this will require a great deal of sensitivity, humility, and charity on our part, as well as a great deal of erudition.

All that said, I believe it is precisely in the area of “how to do theology” that the roots of the characteristic differences between East and West will be found; and for a starting place, one need look no further than the opening pages of the greatest theological work of the heterodox West – Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*.

Theology, Thomas declares, is a science. Indeed, it is the *Regina Scientiarum*, the Queen of Sciences; and even though the full-blown modern understanding of an experimental science would develop only later, still Thomas in the 13th century means, by *scientia*, a body of knowledge about some subject-matter, from which matter the scientist (while he catalogs and deduces and speculates) maintains a kind of objectifying distance. Largely absent from the *Summa*, as from most Western scholasticism, is the vitally important Patristic understanding of theology as both proceeding from and ending again in prayer, with the maxim, repeated constantly by the Orthodox fathers, that the true theologian is the one who prays truly. (This is what we mean when we say that Orthodox theology is personal and mystical. The object of our theological study, God, is Person; any real theology involves entering a mystery, entering into a mystical relationship with the utterly transcendent God.) Thomas himself knew full well that a theology of dry propositions, unconnected from repentance and illumination, would be a senseless waste; and he certainly never encourages, and would no doubt have been horrified at, the idea of experimenting on God; but his methodology itself – his formally structured argument, his overly-certain trust in the accuracy and utility of logical deduction – lends itself easily to a kind of “theology” that can become a bare intellectual exercise, indulged in by a “theologian” with no more reverence for his object (which is, let us not forget, God himself) than a chemist has for his salts or an astronomer for his nebulae.

We might put this point briefly by saying that true theology involves (and demands the involvement) not only of the theologian’s rational intellect (*διάνοια*, *intellectus*) but also of his inner mind and heart (*νοῦς*, *mens*).

Natural science, however, is sharply different. Among the intellectual tools required by the natural scientist are an objective detachment from the object being studied, a deliberate rejection of presuppositions, and at least a suspension of dependence on authorities. The scientist tries to isolate or suppress any enthusiasms for or attachments he may have to the object of his study, and to let his observations and deductions lead him where they will. But if the science in question is theology, if the object under investigation is God himself, this approach simply will not and cannot work, for (at least) three reasons.

First, God (all-powerful, all-knowing, all-holy) refuses to be isolated from, or “objective” about, the scientist. God loves all men – even theologians –, and desires that they all come to a knowledge of the truth – not merely an abstractly correct knowledge of certain facts about himself, but an experience of the living God in all his power, holiness, and beauty – “to be united to the Holy Trinity in charity”. God lies in wait, as it were, always ready pounce on the scientist’s heart, always watching for ways to use the poor investigator’s science against him – to use it to bring him to a sense of sin, of existential unworthiness, and more than that, of desperate anguished longing for the absolute goodness and grace of God. You can try merely to study a Being like that, perhaps; but he won’t allow it. He won’t “play fair” and sit still to be studied. The theologian tries to get a “fix” on some aspect of God, and all the time God is trying – with immeasurably greater intelligence, subtlety, and strength of purpose – to change the theologian from a scientist into a Saint.

Nor could the scientist ever be detached from or objective about God (at least, about the real God), even if God (impossibly) would deign to “sit still” and merely to be observed or described. The more accurate the theologian’s theology is (in the sense of consisting of true statements about God), the less objective he can be, simply because the object his science is trying to understand and describe is supremely and absolutely desirable. God is so beautiful that the only way not to be overwhelmed with adoring non-objectivity is to study some false God instead of the real God, to be grossly mistaken and inaccurate about who and what God is; but a theologian who habitually considers the real truth about the real God will be utterly unable to keep his distance; he’ll be unable to want to keep any distance. Not only is God the source of the scientist’s very being, and worthy of infinite reverence and obedience and love on that account, but is also himself the scientist’s (and every other creature’s) true end and absolute good, the glory and beauty and truth the scientist has been desiring with all his being, from his heart’s depths, even before he ever dreamt of learning or studying or discovering things about God. God’s

truth is the reason we have minds; God's loveliness is the reason we have eyes and hearts.

So because of who God is, and because of what a man is, no man can ever achieve the kind of objective detachment with respect to the true God that theology would require, if it were a science like other sciences. The choice, for a theologian, is either (with detachment and objectivity) to study falsehood, or else (with repentance and love) to worship the truth.

Incidentally, we would do well to remember that not all Western theologians, not even all those we customarily think of as "scholastics", exhibit or try to practice this false detachment or so-called objectivity toward God. Bonaventura, for instance, Thomas's contemporary, is always profoundly devout; François de Sales, at the turn of the 17th century, never over-intellectualizes even when he's exhibiting tremendous learning and subtle logic; and the Carmelite monastics, mystics like John of the Cross and Teresa of Ávila (or, later, Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity) might almost (judging from their writings) have been Athonite hesychasts. Even in the ruin of schism and falsehood, the Holy Ghost lures true hearts to love him.

A third reason, and a very practical one for the academic theologian, why Orthodox theology can't work like a natural science, is the very different place occupied by authority in theology and in science. Authority certainly has an important place in natural science. The scientist can't do every observation himself, nor perform every calculation, and he trusts (at least provisionally) the accuracy of the reported experiments and tabulations of his predecessors and colleagues; in some sense, he is bound by their work. He cannot lightly set aside the facts they have established, or even the theories they have devised to explain and analyze those facts. But if his own observations are at odds with their conclusions, and especially if he is able to rethink a question and formulate a theory which seems to do a better job of systematizing and explaining the phenomena observed, he is entirely free – not only free, he is greatly encouraged – to go beyond what his fellows have done, if necessary even to cast their conclusions and theories aside and argue for his own, new, doctrines. This is how science progresses, and the method has proven to be extremely fruitful – in the realm of natural science.

But God is not, and will never consent to be, the object of that kind of scientific investigation. God could very easily have hidden himself from us completely, and by doing so doomed our theology to fruitless conjecture and naked speculation. But instead, God has revealed himself to mankind, by his own unconstrained choice, both by means of the public revelation (the Law, the Prophets, the incarnate Word, his Church, its tradition and Scripture, the Fathers and Councils) and in the hidden depths of each man's heart. God is perfectly capable of frustrating every attempt to pin him down or to prove things about him (by experiment or observation) that he would rather remained, in the scientific sense, unproven. He wants

us to love him and to believe in him, but by faith rather than by the necessary and undoubtable conclusions of logic and instrumental readings. ("It did not please God", writes St Ambrose, "to save his people by means of dialectic.") He has freely given us what we could never have acquired for ourselves – divine truth, authoritative knowledge of himself, utterly trustworthy and (simultaneously) utterly unproveable in any scientific sense. We believe what the Fathers wrote and what the Church teaches, and we believe with a certainty at least equal to the scientist's certainty in his own methods; and any theologian who wants to know or understand anything about God has no choice but to submit his mind to authority, since that is what God desires and requires of those who seek him.

If Orthodox theology is to go on developing without losing itself in a maze of mere philosophical speculation, it must simply hold firmly and deliberately to the principles that characterized it in ancient times, and have distinguished it from Western errors since the Middle Ages. Chief among those principles are the personal and mystical quality of Orthodox theology (which we have already discussed), and a methodology that embraces the apophatic.

Apophatic theology is characterized by the realization, which is kept near the forefront of theological awareness, that God is entirely beyond all human comprehension and language, that all our positive (or cataphatic) statements about God are true (at best) in only an analogical sense, and that whatever we think we know or understand regarding God is certain to fall infinitely short of the transcendent reality. We make a great many positive statements about God, it is true; in fact, the Church exerts a great deal of care to assure that her children's positive theological statements are in accord with the positive revelation of himself that God has made in the Incarnation and the Church. (We are not free, as Orthodox, to express ignorance or uncertainty regarding, say, the number of persons in the Godhead, or whether the divine nature is or is not eternal and unchangeable.) But we must never fall into the trap of thinking that, having been privileged to make such positive statements, we have somehow circumscribed God, boxed him, understood him. When we deal with God through the medium of human language or human thought, we must remember that God is utterly, existentially, totally different from any other object of our speech or thought; so much so that even to say "God exists" or "God wills" or "God creates" is to speak analogically (letting alone more obviously analogical language as to speak, for instance, of "God's right hand" or of God's wrath). A squirrel exists, and God exists; but God's existence and the squirrel's are not at all the same kind of thing, God existing necessarily and absolutely, as the source of all being and existence, and the squirrel existing merely contingently, held in being by God's continual creative will. That is, we use the same word, "exists", but we are clearly speaking equivocally in applying it both to the Ground of Being and to a rodent.

Likewise, we say that a man wills, and that God wills; but again, even to use the same word, "will", of both activities or powers – a linguistic usage which is certainly warranted by Scripture and the liturgy – is to risk obscuring or forgetting the infinite distance between the absolute eternal Counsel of the Holy Trinity and the ephemeral preferences of a creature. Again, we say God made the universe, and Paul made a tent; but the man's making was a mere reshaping of already existing material, and the tent's continued existence in no way depends on Paul's continuing creativity; whereas if God were to cease upholding the being of the created universe, Paul and tent and squirrel and everything else, all creation would all revert into the utter non-being from which God called it forth. And so on, similarly, with every other word or concept we attribute or apply to God. He is always wholly other, perfectly beyond, entirely transcending all thought and language and knowledge.

Thomas and the lesser scholastics were not unaware of all this; they had read and inherited the thought of the Fathers. The problem with the mediaeval Western theologians is not that they denied the principle of apophatic theology, but rather that they built theological systems to which the Orthodox theologian's apophatic awareness was merely a kind of addendum – a sort of interesting feature –, rather than (what it should have been) one of the chief foundation-stones of their entire project. When they found themselves faced with a seeming paradox, something impossible for man's intellect fully to comprehend, their instinct was (rather than to embrace and adore the mystery) to discover or devise ways to reconcile the apparently contradictory terms. For instance, unable or unwilling simply to rest in the inexplicable and incomprehensible fact of the Eucharistic species' being the flesh and blood of Jesus, Thomas and the scholastics developed doctrines to explain exactly how, and when, and under what conditions, the "transubstantiation", as they called it, takes place; and then, so confident was the Roman church in the value and accuracy of their metaphysical reasoning, that it actually declared these speculations to be dogmatically certain, and now requires all the faithful to believe the scholastics' doctrine, on pain of anathema. The scholastics' concentration on and trust in human logic, their enthusiastic application of the tools of human reason (in particular, of Aristotelian metaphysics) to the matter of God's self-revelation, their willingness to build logical systems and then confuse their own carefully worked-out doctrinal schemes with the revelation itself, all led them into a kind of theology that is often little more than barren philosophical speculation. They construct huge rickety additions and extensions onto the temple of the revealed truth, and abandon the theological approach of the Orthodox Church – which, remember, has prayer, union with God, as its source, its method, and its goal.

Nor did this tendency in Western theology, once it had taken root, disappear with the waning of the scholastic period. It became the principle methodology of Western theology, both

Catholic and Protestant. How many thousands of volumes of controversial theology have been written in the West in vain prideful attempts to reconcile, by human logic and ingenuity, the freedom of man's will and the sovereign grace of God? Molinists, Lutherans, Calvinists, the anti-Jansenist Jesuits – all tried to find ways of explaining and schematicizing the paradox. Whereas an Orthodox theologian is perfectly content to stand where St Paul stands, holding and expressing simultaneously both aspects of the mystery: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The apophatic theologian will be comfortable (or if not exactly comfortable, he will never be surprised or distressed) when he finds there are questions that his theology cannot answer. (Apophatic theology is radically humble.) He will be unfazed by his being powerless to comprehend everything about God – after all, if God were the sort of thing a human mind could fit around, he wouldn't be anything like the God in whom we believe, to whom we ascribe all glory, toward whom we pray. The apophatic theologian will expect the truth sometimes to strike his fragile intellect as paradoxical, or even absurd. (Remember Tertullian's *Certum quia impossibile*.) He will remind himself over and over that his own ideas and concepts of God are not to be identified with God (precisely as St Augustine was doing when he prayed "O Lord, I pray not to Thee as I conceive Thee to be, but as Thou knowest Thyself to be"); that, in fact, his finite concepts and limited ideas are infinitely distant from the true God; and that, if he is to achieve the goal of theology – union, *θέωσις* – he will have to abandon the light of his human intellect, to throw himself unreservedly into the incomprehensible One Who Is, and to pass beyond everything his theology can think or speak or know.

What then are the theological "tools" of the true theologian? Not mere human logic and languages and intelligence (as useful as those things can be!), not mere intellectual flexibility and subtlety, no mere combination of natural powers or the ability to apply them to difficult problems; but infinitely more important are the tools of repentance and illumination and union – a mind not puffed up, but unimpressed with its own power; a heart given to obedience; a body disciplined to watch and pray. Humility, charity, patience, courage, chastity, reverence for authority, service of others, labour, mortification of the passions, fasting, sacramental confession, the Holy Communion – these are the tools of the Orthodox theologian. In short, being a true theologian is little different from being a true Saint; it means to be not only a man who is interested in and knowledgeable about dogmatics or Patristic literature or liturgics or ecclesiastical history or canon law, but to be a man whose whole heart burns with desire for God, a man in love with God, filled with God, a "partaker of the divine nature" – a Saint.

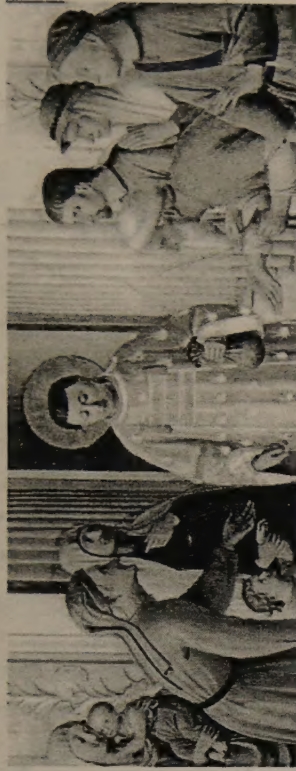
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FALL 2009 RETREAT AND SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Benedictine Monasticism, Family Retreat

Fr. Lester Bundy, St. Columba Orthodox Church, Lafayette, Co

October 9 - 11

A retreat focusing on a brief overview of the origin and history of Benedictine tradition. Emphasis will be placed on the parochial development and adaptation of Benedictine tradition and it's modern application. The format of the retreat will roughly follow a traditional Benedictine monastic day with segments of time through the day for corporate prayer, study and reflection. and work.

The Bible, Spiritual Growth and the Life of Prayer, Adult Retreat

Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon, All Saints Orthodox Church, Chicago, IL

October 15 - 17

Father Patrick will offer his thoughts and guidance on this topic against the backdrop of the rhythm of Benedictine daily prayer.

The Bride, Women's Retreat

Pr. Susan Wallace, St. Andrew's Orthodox Church, Oklahoma City, OK

November 6 - 8

Through a study of the pattern of the Tabernacle, which He gave to His Bride, Israel, and an examination of the life of His Bride, The Blessed Virgin Mary, we will rediscover who we are as His Bride, the Church. Then we can become 'beautifully dressed for our Husband' (Rev. 21:2) as we embrace our individual identity as His Beloved Bride.

Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence

Benedictine Monasticism and Tradition Family Retreat October 9-11, 2009
Speaker Fr. Lester Bundy, St. Columba Orthodox Church

REGISTRATION FORM

Due Date October 1, 2009

	Complete Retreat Package Includes all meals, lodging and speaker sessions			Day Session Only Includes meal and speaker sessions	
Attendee Name	Private Room Before Oct. 1st	Shared Room Before Oct. 1st	Shared Room After Oct. 1st	Before Oct. 1st	After Oct. 1st
	\$160	\$120	\$160	\$40	\$50

No charge for children under 12; \$20 each for children 12 - 17 for weekend package

Total Amount Due _____

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
e-mail: _____
Parish (optional): _____
Request Scholarship** _____

Make all checks payable to the *Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence (BFSL)*

Credit Cards accepted upon request

*Guest rooms are available in different configurations. Some rooms have private baths but most share a common bath. Please contact Tamara McCrossen for availability and questions (720-810-1043) tmccrossen@saintlaurenceosb.org.

**Limited number of scholarships available based on need. Requires priest recommendation.

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Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence

The Bible, Spiritual Growth and the Life of Prayer October 16 - 17, 2009
Speaker Fr. Patrick Henry Reardan, All Saints' Orthodox Church, Chicago

REGISTRATION FORM

Due Date October 1, 2009

Complete Retreat Package

Includes all meals, lodging and speaker sessions

Day Session Only

Includes meal and speaker sessions

Attendee Name	Private Room Before	Shared Room Before	Shared Room After		
	Oct. 1st	Oct. 1st	Oct. 1st	Before Oct. 1st	After Oct. 1st
	\$160	\$120	\$160	\$40	\$50

Total Amount Due _____

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
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Parish (optional): _____
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Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence

Women's Retreat "The Bride" Nov. 6 - 8, 2009

Speaker Pr. Susan Wallace, St. Andrew Orthodox Church, Oklahoma City

REGISTRATION FORM

Due Date October 15, 2009

	Complete Weekend Package*			Saturday Session Only**	
Attendee Name	Private Room Before Oct. 15th	Shared Room Before Oct. 15th	Shared Room After Oct. 15th	Before Oct. 15th	After Oct. 15th
	\$160	\$120	\$160	\$40	\$50

Total Amount Due _____

* Includes lodging Friday and Saturday nights, meals Friday dinner through Sunday brunch, registration and speaker fees.

**Includes lunch and snacks on Saturday, registration and speaker fees.

Please note: we cannot accommodate children for this retreat. Please find a loved one to give respite from motherly duties for this short get-away!

Contact Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____ e-mail: _____
Parish (optional): _____
Request Scholarship**: _____

Make all checks payable to the *Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence (BFSL)*
Credit Cards accepted upon request

*Guest rooms are available in different configurations. Some rooms have private baths but most share a common bath.
Please contact Tamara McCrossen for availability and questions (720-810-1043) tmccrossen@saintlaurenceosb.org.

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Trinity XIV, 2009

An Edifying Discourse offered at St. Mark's

Parish by Subdeacon John Brainerd

Luke 17:14 – “And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Several weeks ago, while I was in the sacristy, vesting for Mass, Father John came in from officiating at Matins.

“A particularly brilliant idea has come to me during Mornin' Prayer,” He said.

“Oh?” I said.

“Yes,” He said, “I think you need to preach a sermon.”

“Oh?” I said, “That is pretty funny.”

“No,” He said, “I am serious. I think you should preach a sermon. The other pious subdeacons are preaching. I think you should, too.”

“OK now, I'm getting really nervous,” I said.

Then, it was time to start Mass.

Later, when I told my wife Mary about my little conversation with Father John, she asked, “Well, what did you tell him?”

“Nothing,” I said.

“And what are you going to do?” she asked.

“I don't know,” I said.

Over the next few days, as I pondered the idea of preaching a sermon, I found it all very troubling. Here I am, this relatively new convert, what insights did I have? The only studies I had done about Orthodoxy were during catechism class. Why, just the other day, I had heard that there is a tradition that a person had to be in Orthodoxy for two years before they are allowed to teach. Certainly, that should exclude me? I had thought that Father John had convinced the Bishop to indulge me with my ordination to the subdeaconate because I talked too much about all my acolyting back in the Anglican Church. I figured he wanted me to put my money where my mouth was. But, I never said anything about preaching sermons.

When Mary and I were studying to become Orthodox, one of the things that bothered me was that all of the children were expected to be chrismated, even Alexander and Nicholas, then ages nine and four. When I was growing up in the Episcopal Church, my family attended Saint James in

Wheatridge for several years. When I was around eleven, we transferred to Saint Mary's in Denver. At Saint James, the usual custom was for the sixth grade Sunday School class to be essentially the Confirmation class. At Saint Mary's, the custom was for children to be confirmed much younger. The upshot of all of this was that my younger sister and I ended up attending confirmation class together at Saint Mary's, and being confirmed together. My sister is three years younger than I. And, while my confirmation instruction and vows all seemed to work for me (after all, here I am today), her religion never really ‘took’. She told me years later that church just seemed ‘kind of stupid’ to her.

So, from this experience, I was adamant that my children should not be confirmed until they were old enough to know what they were doing. It seemed to me that their reason must be engaged for their religion to ‘take’. I made the older ones wait several years longer than their peers at Saint Mary's to attend confirmation class and be confirmed, much to the annoyance of several of them.

Now, as we were preparing to become Orthodox, I was ‘getting my back up’, preparing to ‘take a stand’ for ‘what I believed’. When I mentioned this to Mary, she said, “Well, are we going to really join Orthodoxy, and really trust its teachings, or not?”

“Well...” I said.

“Because, if we are, we must accept the teachings of the Church, and submit our wills to a higher authority.”

“Um...” I said.

“So, what's it going to be?” She said.

As most of you are aware, I submitted my will to the wisdom of the Church. All of my children were chrismated together with Mary and me. I don't know exactly how or why this should be. I can tell you that it is a great blessing to be kneeling at the communion rail with Alexander and Nicholas, joining in the unity of the Sacrament together with my two young sons, as well as my older children and my wife.

As I reflected upon Father John's ‘brilliant idea’, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps here was another time when I needed to let go of my will and ideas about things, and again be obedient, and do as I was asked. So, here I am.

In the words of today's Gospel, we see Our Lord traveling through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. He meets ten lepers, who call to him. “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Jesus answers “Go show yourselves to the priests.” And so they did.

Lessons can be learned from these Samaritans, as we learned last week from the Good Samaritan. First, the Samaritan lepers

see that they need help, that they cannot help themselves. So too do we, as mortals living in a fallen world, come to recognize that we cannot help ourselves; we are powerless over our own selves and our actions. As Saint Paul says in Romans, chapter 7 verse 19, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do". They call out for help, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us". Again, you and I too call for help through prayer, and through dragging ourselves to Church for Mass. And, Jesus listens and responds. He tells them to go show themselves to the priests. And they do what they are told. This is perhaps one of the more interesting bits in the story. None of the lepers responds in any way to Jesus. No one raises his hand and says, "Uh, Master, sorry to be a bother, but, um, I still have leprosy, so I was just wondering why should we go see the priests?" No one asks for an explanation. They just go. This is a lesson I think we can all take to heart. I know I had to submit to the wisdom of the Church concerning chrismation. I know I don't understand the meaning of Life, the Universe, and Everything. How could I? I mean, which makes more sense: to follow the wisdom and advice of some guy living on South Logan Street in Denver on a tiny planet in a run of the mill galaxy, or to do what the Lord and Creator of the Universe tells you? This is the choice I have every day. Since I have been given the very small grace to perceive that Jesus Christ is God, the Creator of the world, then I attempt to choose to follow the advice and counsel and yes commands of this Lord, just as the ten lepers did.

Now, I don't mean to imply that we must forgo all thinking and knowledge, and just be little automatons for Christ. Far from it. One of the things I was taught in my former denomination is that the Church is Catholic, meaning universal, all encompassing. We are whole persons in the Church, body, mind, and spirit. We don't have to check our intellects at the door. In my Orthodox catechism class, through study of Archimandrite Zacharias' book about Saint Siloan, *The Enlargement of the Heart*, I learned that I don't have to check my heart at the door, either. But, with our whole selves, we must learn to follow the Church's teachings and Our Lord's commands.

And, as the lepers followed Jesus' command, they were healed along the way. Wouldn't you know, we too are often blessed and healed when we obey Our Lord's commands? Of course and unfortunately, we cannot always perceive the benefits we receive by our obedience. As Father John mentioned last week, paraphrasing Miss Theresa of Avila who, when her donkey threw her into the muddy water while trying to cross a muddy stream, screamed at God, "If this is how you treat your friends, Lord, it's no wonder you have so few." We must take it on faith, sometimes, that we are being blessed by God.

Now the story continues with only one of the lepers returning to Our Lord. He fell on his face at Our Lord's feet, and gave thanks to Our Lord. So too, must we make every effort to thank God for all the blessings he has bestowed on us, for the Church and for our families; for our lives and the beautiful world into which He has placed us. What are we to make of the other nine lepers that knew they were in need, asked for and received God's Grace, and yet walked away and were never heard from again? What can we conclude regarding our family and friends that marched with us for a time in the Church and now do so no longer? Will my sister someday have a change of heart and come to see that Christ's Church is something other than 'kind of stupid'? The truth is, we can't know what might have happened, or what might be. In C.S. Lewis' *Prince Caspian*, Aslan (Lewis' personification of Christ in the fantasy world of Narnia) tells Lucy, "No one can see someone else's story; only their own." Our Lord does not condemn the nine lepers. He doesn't say they should be reviled or that they have sentenced themselves to hell for their actions. As we know, faith is a requirement for healing. Since they were all healed, they must all have had faith. We just don't know what became of them. And quite honestly, we don't know what will become of us. All we do know is that we must follow Our Lord's commands.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.



Richard Cyril Rose receives the Mystery of Chrismation with Subdeacon John Woolley as sponsor. The Order for Reception and Chrismation is in the BCP 2009 www.eoc.org



A vast congregation assembled to join Bp. Basil and St. Mark's Faithful for the Nativity BVM Feast. Thanks to Christopher Vaughn and the Choir for a beautiful performance of the Mass Music and the St. Nectarios Hymn to the Virgin. Our thanks to Dn Vladimir, Subdeacon John W., Reader Cuthbert Vaughn and the acolytes. And to Mat. Deborah, Mat. Jeanne, Sister Sophia, and Nancy Greenlee (BELOW) for hosting the Reception with the help of the Church Women.



His Grace, Bishop Basil at St. Laurence Retreat Campus with Fr. David Mustian and Fr. John. His Grace explored the Ambulatory around the Basilica and joined the Faithful for Sung Morning Prayer. Reader Andrew Greenlee (PICTURED BELOW WITH HIS FOLKS STEPHEN AND NANCY) read the Lessons. Thanks to Tamara McCrossen for preparing a pleasant luncheon before we returned to Denver. Schedules for the Fall Retreats are published as an insert in this issue of the LION.



His Grace Bp Basil Ordained Oliver John Brainerd, shown here carrying Our Lady of Walsingham in procession and Andrew Greenlee (above) as Readers. Andrew is a scholar at the U of Chicago and Oliver at the Pontifical Lateran University.



Laurie Baker and Kathryn Reeves hosted the Church Women's Tea as a Fund Raiser for the work of the Altar Guild who do amazing work with a small budget.



The Orthodox Christian Fellowship of College aged faithful and the SOYO teens work together on events including the Retreat over the Dormition weekend. Our youngest scholars enjoyed the Church Women's Tea at a table next to the Nursery.

Bp. Basil and the Deanery Clergy and wives assembled in the private Dining Room at PATSY'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT in North Denver for the annual diner and meeting. Fr. John suggested Patsy's after His Grace totally approved of the idea of "going Italian" this year.

William Sebastian Coit, choir member at St. Mark's,

manages Patsy's and he made all the arrangements and provided ample quantities of

Vino Rosso for the dinner. His Grace and all

the Priests and Deacons and spouses were most

pleased with the food, service, and efficiency of the kitchen. His

Grace said "I loved it!" We also noticed that the regular dining room was full at every

table. This was the best attended of all the Deanery meetings to date.

Patsy's Italian Restaurant (<http://patsysinn.com/>) is located at 3651 Navajo Street and directions are provided on the website. (303) 477-8910



The home pa

Patsy's Italia

ian restaurant. Founded in 1921 by the Aiello family, Patsy's has undergone a few changes over the years but the heart and soul of tradition have remained the same.

We invite you to sample our authentic Italian recipes and old-style charm. All the food is made by hand. The back wall of Patsy's dining room features a hand-painted mural and other walls are lined with photos that showcase the rich history of the restaurant. Families can sit in the cheerful dining room and dine, while those alone are always welcome to visit with one of the friendly bartenders.

Our specialties include homemade spaghetti and lasagna, Chicken Marsala, Balsamic Grilled Chicken Rigatoni, Italian Fried Trout, and Italian New York Strip Steak.

Patsy's is open for lunch and dinner on weekdays. We are not open for lunch on Saturday and we are closed on Sunday.

On the advice of his cardiologist Fr. Donald David Lloyd D.D., has decided not to travel to Colorado this October but to reschedule his visit. Sorry he will not be with us for the "October Fest" planned by the Church Women the last Sunday in October.

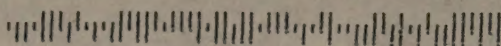
The Saturday program at St. Mark's will be suspended for one day, the 17th of October, as Fr. John will be serving at the St. Laurence Retreat campus during the program with Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon that week. See the AD for the Retreat Schedule in this LION and on the website :

www.saintlaurenceosb.org

Please contact Tamara McCrossen for details and registration, 720-810-1043

The St. Laurence campus is a totally independent non-profit corporation, BFSL, and is intended to serve the spiritual opportunities of Orthodox and Catholic parishes and groups. The capacity of the dormitory is currently about forty beds. The chapel is spacious, lofty, and of a Romanesque Basilica design with open trusses and surrounded entirely by a covered Ambulatory. The Altar table stands on five marble pillars and is designed like the oldest Greek and Latin examples. It has served for Western Rite Mass and should be equally suitable for a Byzantine Divine Liturgy. The campus is 560 acres of wilderness bordering Tallahassee Creek about 10 miles West of Canon City, Colorado.

THE LION



address correction requested



The Lion is an unofficial, much loved, and uncompensated newsletter of St. Mark's Parish of Denver, Colorado.

V Rev John Charles Connely, editor

Matushka Deborah Connely, staff photographer and bookstore manager

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For the BCP and Altar Missal see: www.EOC.org

For Lancelot Andrewes Press: www.andrewespress.com

For the Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence see:

<http://saintlaurenceosb.org>

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